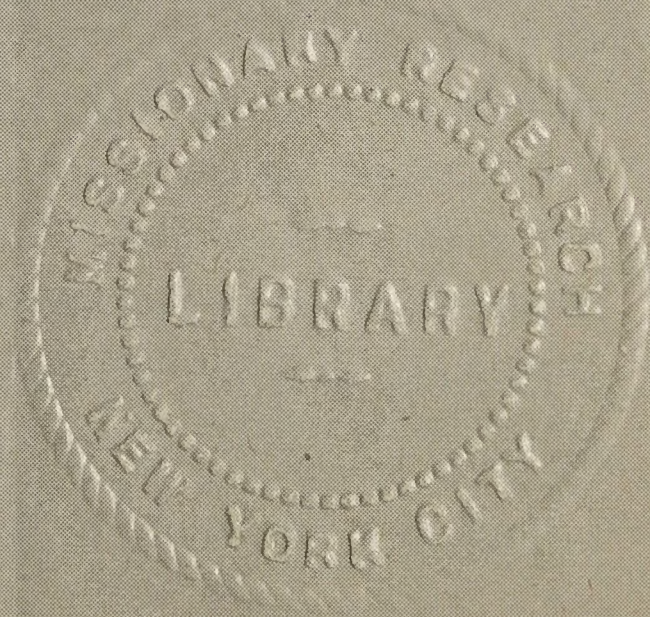


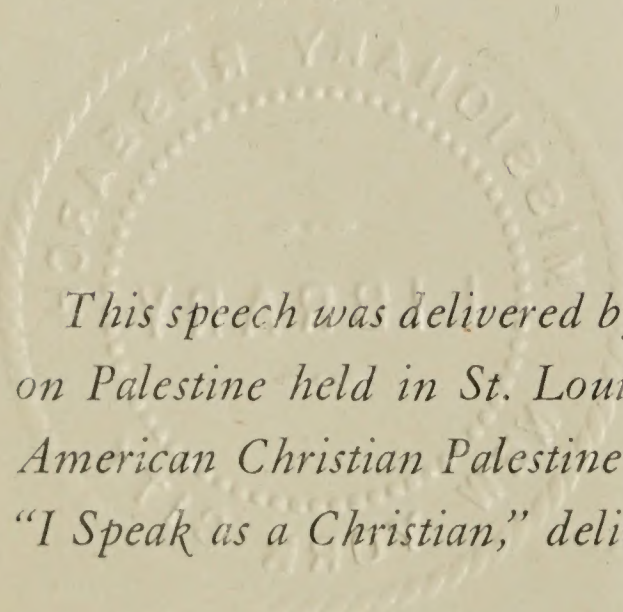
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I Speak Again as A Christian

DOROTHY THOMPSON





This speech was delivered by Miss Thompson at the South Central Conference on Palestine held in St. Louis on January 11, 1945, under the auspices of the American Christian Palestine Committee. It supplements her previous address, "I Speak as a Christian," delivered in New York in November 1943.

IT HAS often been said that this is a people's war. Yet, as the war unfolds and we become engrossed with the movements of armies, now on the seas and islands of the South Pacific, now in Eastern Europe, and now in the vast and bloody battle at the German gates; as all these things fill the newspapers which we read daily, I greatly fear that we tend to lose sight of the issues over which this war is fought—chief among them the very future of human beings on this planet.

It is my hope, though at times my faith wavers, that the hideous era through which we now live, represents but the labor and birth pangs of a new and better epoch. That it will be *new* is certain. Whether it will be better depends on our wisdom and energy. We are seeing the disintegration of political and economic forms that have failed to satisfy the sense of justice and the urgent necessities of the vast masses of people all over the world.

Anti-Semitism always rises in times of crisis when men have not yet found the solution they seek, are not yet on the clear path to a new epoch, and are engaged in blaming each other for the sad death of the world to which they have become accustomed. Who is to blame? That is the universal cry! And the easiest answer is: The Jews.

Why particularly the Jews?

I do not know the answer; I can only guess at it on the basis of such powers of reason and observation as I possess. Yet the answer evades reason because it is in a sphere where reason does not function. Men are aware of a ferment in the world, and the ferment requires an easy explanation to most minds. It must be due to human intervention, men think; it must be the result of a conspiracy. As we have seen, it is due to quite other causes. But man is anthropomorphic. One cannot get up a riot against science, which, at the same time that it is disorganizing the century, is curing our

children, abolishing plagues, turning our wheels, and showering us with luxuries. Yet the great ferment and upset of our world is largely due to science. No, some *men* must be responsible for this ferment—so argues the average man. What men? What men are there amongst us who are almost like us but not quite like us? How easy to say: The Jews!

For the Jews *are* a people. One can argue about this to the end of time, but the Jews feel themselves to have a peculiar social inheritance, and non-Jews observe the same thing. For the Gentile world there is something ghostly about the Jews. They are a people who share certain religious observances; who express a certain solidarity amongst themselves. True, this can be observed of many other groups. The members of the Roman Catholic Church have a solidarity transcending nation; the Irish, both through and outside the Church, have group loyalties. But the Jews—so feels a part of the Gentile world—are different. They are not merely a religion but a people. Yet they live an abnormal life—abnormal as compared with the rest of the world. They live in many countries, but have no country of their own. There is something wrong with them—therefore they are to blame.

If anti-Semitism is not new, its nature today is unique. There have been anti-Semitic movements in the world before. Russian pogroms under the Tsars are alive in the memory of many. But the Jewish persecution of our era is peculiar. The brand of anti-Semitism which Hitler has introduced to the world is based on the assumption that the Jews haven't the right to live on this planet. They are, according to Hitler, the source of all evil, the genesis of all maladjustments in society. In short, they are a corporate devil that must be exorcised. This anti-Semitism is not directed against the so-called ghetto Jew alone, but against the Jewish race as such—against the Jew who has retained his religion, against the Jew who has discarded it, against the conscious Jew, the converted Jew, the assimilated Jew, and even the partial Jew.

The mass slaughter of the Jews in the past few years has exterminated Jews of every Nazi-held country, poor and rich, German and Pole, Zionist and assimilationist. Distinctions which Jews might recognize amongst themselves have been ignored by Hitler. The terrible thing about Hitler's promise to annihilate the Jews is that he has kept this more successfully than any other of his promises.

At last the extent of the horror that has been visited upon the Jews has begun to penetrate the imagination of the free world. The process of humiliation and destruction has been going on for twelve years, but the reaction has until now been negative. First, there was indifference. Then there was compassion. Perhaps now there will be action—as there needs to be.

Refugees and the Democracies

The tragedy of the democracies on this problem is that their words are lofty, their gestures noble, but their deeds lag far behind. In the pre-war years when the need for remedial action was so urgent, the democracies seemed paralyzed and unable to mobilize the enormous resources they possess. Today they are unable to help the European Jews except by force of arms.

Two years ago a small group of men met in Bermuda for an Anglo-American conference to examine the possibilities of aiding the European refugees, among whom the Jews occupy the position of chief sufferers from Nazi ferocity. These men have tried to transform the lofty words sounded in the United Nations declaration of December 1942 into deeds that would rescue victims and set them on the road that will restore them to security and freedom. But the net result seems to have been to transfer some thousand of the most threatened to temporary haven here.

The Bermuda conference underscored a point I have often made during the years that the refugee problem mounted in scope and tragedy. Too long the refugee problem has been largely regarded as one of international charity. It must be regarded now, and in the coming years, as a problem of international politics.

No democratic country can wash its hands of this problem of the doomed Jews if it wishes to retain its own soul. This war is not fought for the rescue of Jews. Neither was the Civil War fought to end slavery but rather to save the Union. Yet, as Lincoln said "These slaves contributed a powerful interest," as Hitler's massacres and slaveries have. The very essence of the democratic principle is humanistic; it involves respect for human dignity and human personality; it implies a revulsion against persecution of indi-

viduals, races or classes. When its capacity for righteous indignation is exhausted by weariness or by callousness, then the democratic principle will surely die. It is impossible to divorce Democracy from Christendom. At the root of both is the concept of human dignity. And human dignity derives wholly from the concept of God and of man as His child and ward.

It is perfectly true that the problem was created by Hitler and not by the democracies. The burden is not of our making, but nevertheless it is impossible for us not to accept the burden put upon us. Without a belief in the dignity of man, without indignation against arbitrarily created human suffering and the willingness to overcome it, there is no democratic spirit.

With these ideas are integrated the fundamental concepts of civilization, the thesis of the Four Freedoms. And so we must be moved not merely by pity for these Jews in this most brutal world, but by the need to reaffirm our own beliefs, to take a stand for them, to recapture the ground which our indifference has lost, lest our precepts become hollow dogmas to which, at last, not even lip service will be given anywhere.

A defeatist attitude toward the refugee problem, created by the opponents of democracy, becomes a defeatist attitude toward our own principles.

Why the Zionists Are Right

In considering the nature and the solution of the Jewish problem, one fundamental factor must be kept in the forefront. The Jews *are* a people. To ignore that fact is to miss the point of the abnormality of the Jewish position.

I believe that as long as the Jews do not have a country of their own, built by themselves and expressing their own peculiar culture and way of life, there will continue to exist a common superstition about them in the Gentile world. I am convinced that the root of anti-Semitism is superstition. I do not mean the cheap and common anti-Semitism which merely arises from a desire to wield a cudgel against an able competitor, or the social anti-Semitism which leads pure Anglo-Saxons of ancient lineage to snub others who have not been in the country as long as they, or speak with an accent, or eat food flavored with garlic. When I was a child, living in an almost purely Anglo-Saxon community, I was on the periphery because

my father was a newcomer, but there was no more prejudice against the few Jews than against the Polacks, the Wops, or the Heinies. I believe this kind of club spirit is probably ineradicable in the human race, though it will diminish when and if the human race abandons the cannibalism of the present economic and power systems, and ceases to live by devouring each other.

But this is not what I mean by the anti-Semitism that has flared so cruelly, disastrously and erratically in our time. This new anti-Semitism, which is nevertheless very old and always characteristic of crisis—which flared, for instance, at a time when the culture and economy of the Middle Ages was yielding to the Renaissance—is the result of superstition. The Jews are a *doomed* race, think more fortunate people—doomed to be homeless. That must be the result of some Sin committed.

The whole anti-Semitic movement is full of fetish and black magic. It is a kind of modern witchcraft. Back of this black magic is the fact that, in the framework of human society as it is organized on this earth, the Jews *do* lead an abnormal life. They are a cohesive people without a place on earth of their own. That fact gives them, in the superstitious mind, an atmosphere of doom. An atmosphere of doom produces an atmosphere of fear. Jewish life must, therefore, be *normalized*.

That is why I believe the Zionists are right. I believe that Jewry must have a home and a state, in order that the life of Jewry shall be normalized to the life of all other men on this planet. When that happens, and when a few generations have passed, the problem of “assimilation” will solve itself. For then a man of Jewish inheritance can very simply decide whether he is or is not a Jew. He will be able to change his religion if his conscience so dictates and his Jewish race-consciousness, also, without abandoning his people and feeling that he is traitorous. For his people will be represented, as all other peoples are represented, by what they as an integrated and responsible community are able to show as their unique culture.

I am not a nationalist, though I trust I am a patriot. I believe the world is slowly but inexorably moving toward greater unity. But that unity will not express itself, I profoundly hope, in some great universal empire or super-state, but in the idea of Neighborhood, of the Good Neighbor, of federation, of supra-national institutions for those things which are by nature supra-national, such as currency, mutual protection and control of the air and seaways. But as one does not attempt to build a state by first

abolishing the family, but bases the state *on* the family, so a free world order of the future cannot be built by abolishing the nations, but by establishing them: a home for every one of the peoples—and then moving toward those international institutions which will eventually make each person a member of a family, of a nation, and of the world.

In that family of nations the Jews should have their place. Room must be made for them. It need not be an enormous state; it need not be a state in which all Jews must live. All Englishmen and Britons don't live on the British Isles or even in the British Commonwealth. All Swiss don't live in Switzerland, or all Swedes in Sweden. More Irish live in America than live in Ireland. But a Jew, like an Irishman, must be able to say: That is the land of my fathers, the expression of my people's genius, and that is the land, that wherever I am alien, represents my interests and protects me according to the law of nations. It is my firm conviction that when that happens and happens fully, the superstitions about the Jews will begin to evaporate.

What the Jews have already accomplished in Palestine emphasizes that the establishment of a Jewish state there is not only theoretically desirable, but concretely practical. Between the two wars, from which the Jewish people have perhaps suffered most, Palestine has made great strides forward. There is no good arguing at this date whether Jewish Palestine should be established. It *is* established. It can only be aided or liquidated. The Jews in Palestine numbered only 75,000 in 1919. They now number three quarters of a million. They have spent in Palestine hundreds of millions of dollars, donated or invested by people of their race from all parts of the earth. They have developed beautiful agricultural settlements, built fine cities, constructed roads. For the sake of building this national homeland Jewish youth, many of whom have had academic degrees, turned themselves into stonebreakers and farmers. More recently, these young men, and even young women, have shown themselves to be equally fine soldiers, serving with the British Army on many fronts and with special distinction in the campaign under General Montgomery.

These pioneers in Palestine have demonstrated that Jews are not born to be peddlers or intellectuals or bankers, but can be excellent farmers and factory workers and research scientists and artisans.

To my mind, the greatest things that Zionism has accomplished have been amongst youth. For it has removed them from an abnormal atmos-

phere into one which is normal for the rest of mankind. It has set their feet upon the earth, earth which they can call their own and defend as their own, and has restored to them their very names, taken from them in the past by European states who would not recognize the Hebrew name-system. The youthful citizen of Palestine *has* a name, a Hebrew name. The youthful Zionist is not divided from mankind by the fact of his Palestinian and national citizenship; he is more closely joined to it. Every visitor to Palestine has been surprised to find the Palestinian Jews more Gentile in many ways than those who have lived in the Gentile world. What they mean is more *normal* according to Gentile standards. They *are* more normal — because they are unquestionably *at home*.

In the past years thousands of young children have been rescued from Hitler's Europe and brought into Palestine. Immigration has been greatly restricted by the White Paper, and the conflicts with the Arabian world. Of that I will also speak, but here I would like to say a word about what has been happening to Jewry through its children.

To the sufferings which Jewish children share with millions of other children in this war-torn world must be added another suffering which can have the most corrosive of all effect upon the soul, the suffering of humiliation. The effect of humiliation upon the young is to create either an aggressive, obsequious or neurotic personality. That is why the possibility of bringing them to Palestine is so gratifying.

For in this world as it is, the one single place where a Jewish *child* from Europe can be sent, with the most favorable opportunity to grow into a psychologically adjusted human being, is Palestine. The reason is a simple one; it is the only place where the Jewish child, after being subjected to every kind of physical hardship and psychological shock finds himself immediately welcome as a member of a *community*. Elsewhere he may be welcomed as an individual. There alone is he welcome and in that sense that he is *at home*. Elsewhere he must immediately compete. There he must *cooperate*.

How Jews Make More Room for the Arabs

The difficulties of building the Jewish homeland are prodigious. We must admit it. The difficulty, for instance, with the Arabs. That difficulty

is also, as I see it, a part of the revolutionary upheavals of our world. As long as imperialism is still flourishing, and the world of the peoples is not yet aligned, fear and panic will attend every new venture. There will one day, I trust, be a united Arabian world, self-governing and free of imperialist interference. In that world a Jewish homeland can exist. Palestine, which before the last war was subject to the Sultan, was, and is, a mixed state. Arabs and Jews are there and there to stay. But Arabia as a whole is underpopulated. Modern agricultural techniques, irrigation and forestry can reclaim for Arabia new continents of soil. In some future the wealth of nations will rest upon labor, and men then will be an asset, and not a liability. There is already more room for Arabs in Palestine than there was before the Jews came, because there is more agriculture and industry. Whereas there were 600,000 Arabs in Palestine in 1919, there are now 900,000, and the Arab population has grown as the Jewish has grown. Iraq, properly cultivated and modernized, could attract millions of Arabians to a better life than they have ever known. The welfare of one people is the welfare of all people.

The Jews in Palestine have not dealt with the Arabs as our forefathers dealt with the Indians. They are not "conquering" a continent. Every bit of their land has been bought from the owners and paid for at an exorbitant price—not with whisky and colored beads. The land they bought was swampy, deforested and eroded. The Arab lands are still in the same condition. The land of the Jewish colonists, having first been purchased, has been reclaimed by a system of cooperative land settlements or colonies whose work is quite incredible.

In considering Palestine and looking at it as a Gentile, I see that there is a definite Palestinian contribution not only to the Jews but to the Gentile world. It concerns the question of Lebensraum. The antiquated ideas of the Axis nations are that the areas of the earth must be redistributed on a sort of quota system in order to assure everyone equal prosperity. But the scientist sees that prosperity does not depend upon how much soil each person or people has, but how that soil is used. The Jews, in building up Palestine, have actually created more Lebensraum for the Arabs, and not less. For they have taken parched and exhausted soil and by scientific methods of soil rebuilding and soil conservation have *created* the land on which they live. And to agriculture they have added industry and commerce. And that is a real contribution to the solving of even larger prob-

lems than the Jewish problem. It means, for us, that the earth as a whole is not over-populated but under-populated and that every nation can get its vital space without exterminating or enslaving other nations. Palestine was a land flowing with milk and honey, centuries ago, in the annals of the Old Testament. For epochs it lay waste. And it is again a land flowing with milk and honey in the hands of the Jewish colonists. If the Arabs would emulate the Jews in their soil conservation methods, they would have more land than they know what to do with, and could create a blooming Arab civilization.

It has not only been science, but the historical social sense of the Jews that has recreated Palestine. The experiment has proved what every religious society, such as the Catholic monastic system or the Mormons, learned long ago in the field of economics, namely that cooperative organization is the creator of individual prosperity. They have also proved that there is no logical cleavage between town and country. The agricultural economy of Palestine is created by urban-minded people and is the better for it. As one who has believed for years that all modern societies need new immigration, new internal immigration—of the city into the country and the country into the city, of the intellectual into the society of the worker and the worker into the world of the intellectual—I believe that the Palestine experiment would deserve to live on its merits as an example, regardless of the Jewish question.

In discussing Palestine as a homeland for the Jewish people, I am not unmindful of the continued existence of British resistance to increased immigration. When the White Paper first appeared I wrote a column about it. Its thesis is just as correct today. I said:

The British Government has announced that in the future no more land in Palestine may be purchased from Arabs by Jews or anybody else. Therewith it falls in with Hitler's blood-and-soil theory.

The British Government believes that the Palestine Jews will be loyal to Britain under all circumstances. But the Palestine Arabs are questionable. The British Government wants to conciliate them, and does so at the expense of the Palestine Jews, under the argument that Britain is fighting against racial persecution and that the most important thing for the Jews is that Britain should win the war.

Unfortunately, however, Britain establishes a policy which not only makes her noble words seem hollow but which will remain to plague

her in peace. For over-crowded Europe, many people and not only Jews, will need colonization projects when this war is over. It has needed them for years. And it happens that the Palestine colonization project is the finest example existing of what transplanted Europeans, animated by faith and idealism, can do. For Britain to come out for the theory that a race anywhere constitutes an eternal static population is simply to condemn the undeveloped portions of the earth to eternal stagnation. On that basis this continent would still belong to the Indians, and there never would have been a British Commonwealth.

The Jews and Mankind

It will need the wholehearted and united efforts of the Jewish people, along with all the other friends of progress, to prevent the translation of a Munich settlement for Palestine into a permanent document of United Nations policy. In this connection, I must say that the quarrel between Zionists and assimilationists has always seemed to me to be a quite unscientific one. Among the Jews there are plainly those who feel a national cohesion and wish to lead a Jewish existence. There are also those who don't—who feel themselves Americans wholly or British or French. It is ridiculous to divide them, or for them to divide themselves, into incompatible groups. The two ideas are *not* incompatible. People of all nations assimilate with each other. Members of all nations transfer as citizens, or as members of a culture, from one nationality to another.

So it is also with Jews. There is no concept of making an assimilated Jew go back to Palestine. But were their nationhood recognized and made corporeal on soil, as is the nationhood of all other peoples, the process of assimilation would, in my opinion, proceed in fact much more easily. For then all Jews would not feel that they have to carry the nation around in their own bosoms, but could actually leave it if they didn't profoundly care for it—leave it, where it belongs, on a *soil*.

I believe that the Jewish people, as a people, have a contribution to make to mankind. I am familiar enough with the social organization of Palestine to believe that the stone that is being rejected by Europe may become the very pillar of the temple. A people who through the vicissitudes of thousands of years has retained its identity while other peoples have perished off the earth, has in it some wisdom of survival which transcends mere

happenstance. Its recognition of the unique God, the creator; its religion of righteousness, truth, and charity; its emphasis on the social nature of the family; its respect for intellect which also leads it to place the scholar and teacher above the millionaire in esteem—all of these qualities of mind, all this accumulation of social experience under persecution and suffering, contain the elements for the building of a great civilization. A great civilization is not necessarily a large state. It is a state based on the soundest rules, the deepest fellowship.

I have often thought of the Jewish concept of the Messiah.

To us, Jesus Christ is the Messiah. But Christ can only save mankind, through mankind. He is not only a Person—a divine Person—but a mind, a concept, that will recreate the world. The Messiah is in us—in all of us together, when we put our talents and wisdom to work to demonstrate to the world how a social order can be created in which there is freedom and order, individual rights and community well-being.

I believe in the Jewish people, as I believe in all peoples. I am not a Jew. If a Jew does not believe in his own people, as a people, then he is less a Jew than I.

I have heard even Jews say, "Why should a Jew interest me more than a Pole? They, too, are suffering."

I always ask such Jews what they are actually doing about the Poles. I always find that they are doing nothing beyond what any American may do. They are not doing as much about the Poles as the Polish-Americans.

Every American is fighting for the Poles and the Czechs. Every American is fighting for the restoration of the Polish state, for the restoration of its government, with the power of defense, with the power to coin money and raise loans and to take a hundred other measures for the rehabilitation of the Polish people.

The Jewish people are not so fortunate. Some day, I hope and believe, they will be. But in stark reality, the future of the Jews as individuals and as a people depends largely upon the Jews and Christians of America. The largest number of Jews in the world lived in Europe. The next largest number lived in North America. The first community would have been utterly lost except for the second community.

Jews are believers in the prophets of Israel, who through every vicissitude understood and preached that misfortune and disaster are but the invitations of God to repentance. Their religion teaches them the inexorable

law that all sins against God and nature are punished in due time, as does our religion which we conceive as the fulfillment of the Jewish prophecy. But the Christian religion derives its sublimity from the concept of God as love and mankind as a universal fellowship. Yet under the cloak of that, to me, loftiest ideal yet born, man persecutes and degrades his brothers and sometimes, alas, even in Christ's name. No part of the Christian world can wholly wash its hands of Hitler's crimes against the Jews. For if there had not been anti-Semitism in all societies, if Hitler had not known that everywhere there would have been some to applaud him, he would never have dared undertake his plan of extermination. The salvation of the Jews must come, therefore, in part, as an act of repentance from the Christian world. This involves, I believe, recognition of the right of the Jewish people to create a civilization like all other peoples, provided they create it in the framework of a cooperative law-abiding world.

I speak as a Christian who dreams an ancient Jewish and Christian dream, that the nations of the world may one day be gathered into a single fold, as free men and free nations, acknowledging the sovereignty above them all of a single law under God. I conceive the world of the future, if we are not all to perish at each other's hands, as an hierarchical structure—in the modern phrase, a pluralistic society—a House of Many Mansions, in which all will be securely at home, as persons, nations, and cultures. Each nation will have its own room in that house, and its own garden to tend, provided it does not abuse the earth and its resources. People will be free to move about in that House and change their rooms. But before that can come, everyone must have the status of a room.

The great Christian socialist and Italian patriot of the Risorgimento, Mazzini, said in the last century, "I love my country because I love the *idea* of country. What I covet for my people I covet for *all* people." It is in that sense that I understand and sympathize with the passion of the long dispersed Jews for their newly established national home.

And a suggestion has recently been made by Mrs. Anne O'Hare McCormick, namely that the New League of Nations be established this time in the Holy City of three great religions, Jerusalem, which lies on the very crossroads of the earth—that in this seat of empire and conflict be established the capital of the world, the Mansion of the Many Mansions. Who knows—this, too, may come.

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